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# Lambert, James Knox Polk, 1864-1960 (MSS 545)

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## Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Lambert, James Knox Polk, 1864-1960 (MSS 545)" (2015). *MSS Finding Aids*. Paper 4056.  
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*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 545    LAMBERT, James Knox Polk, 1864-1960**

1½ boxes. 11 folders. 174 items. 1918-1959. Originals.

1992.132.35

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

James Knox Polk Lambert, the son of William Wiotte Lambert (1830-1910) and Nancy Lucinda Dixon (1848-1864), was born in Simpson County, Kentucky on 5 March 1864. On 21 July 1897, he married Cora Van Velsor (1868-1939) of Humboldt, Iowa.

In May 1918, Lambert, a lawyer, departed for Europe with the American Expeditionary Forces to serve under the direction of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which had been charged with attending to the welfare and morale of American soldiers overseas. He was stationed in England and France, and also paid short visits to Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Switzerland. Lambert returned to the United States in August 1919 to resume his law practice in Chicago, Illinois. He revisited Europe several times and gave speeches to American audiences about his travels. He was a member of Masonic lodges in Kentucky, South Dakota and Illinois.

After his admission to the California bar in 1923, Lambert practiced law in Long Beach, California. He died in Long Beach on 28 February 1960 and was interred in Westminster Memorial Park, Orange County, California.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection consists mostly of the writings, notes and speeches of James Knox Polk Lambert relating to his World War I experiences, his participation in the Freemasons, and his far-ranging interest in European history and culture arising out of his war work overseas with the YMCA. An inventory is in Box 1, Folder 1.

Box 1, Folder 2 contains Lambert's diary recording his experiences with the YMCA in Europe from 1918-1919. Although he was in Paris during the German offensive of summer 1918, and was in London when the Armistice went into effect on 11 November 1918, his diary begins with his tour at Morn Hill Camp in Winchester, England, a large base where American troops were prepared for front line service. Lambert describes his activities, including attendance at various celebratory events surrounding the Armistice. The YMCA's activities in England diminish, but Lambert returns to France in January 1919 to continue the organization's demanding work of meeting the recreational, athletic, religious, and educational needs of

millions of restless soldiers awaiting repatriation. As part of his work arranging sightseeing trips, Lambert records his tour of the entire French battle front. He makes brief factual comments about each battle site, and the appalling destruction occasionally prompts him to add a quote from poetry or drama. He writes at greater length of the battle of Verdun, in which he takes particular interest. Late in May 1919, he is transferred to the south of France to attend to the cancellation of leases and other business matters in connection with the YMCA's departure from the country, and records his travels through the area. Returning to Paris in July, he witnesses the celebrations following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. The diary includes a record of his trip back to the United States, in the company of a large contingent of Masons, on board the *S. S. Haverford*. Also included throughout the diary are Lambert's notes, statistics and impressions on such topics as the war's effects and significance, the contribution of the United States to the war, the role of women YMCA workers, and memorializing the war dead. He also follows the progress of peace negotiations, detecting a tone of "defiance & the lust for revenge" in Germany's note accepting the treaty terms. In Paris preparing to depart for home, he also notes with interest a "whisker strike" of the city's waiters in protest of a ban on facial hair.

Box 1, Folder 3 contains Lambert's journal of his experiences with the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe. A topical and name index to the journal is included. While it relates to the same time period as the diary in Folder 2, this journal elaborates at greater length on both factual information and Lambert's impressions of numerous aspects of the war and his travels, including battle sites, the peace negotiations and celebrations, the League of Nations, military and political figures, war songs and humor, the Paris "whisker strike," the executions by the Germans of British nurse Edith Cavell and Belgian spy Gabrielle Petit, influenza deaths, the effects of the war, and the cultural characteristics of European peoples, especially the French. He provides a vivid picture of the "mania" to return home that gripped American soldiers following the Armistice, and the challenge for the YMCA in addressing their welfare. Also of interest is his discussion of various criticisms of the YMCA's war work such as its sale of cigarettes, its "desertion" of the sick and wounded (whose care, Lambert argues, was the responsibility of the Red Cross), and its emphasis on religion. While the YMCA was perhaps most visible in its operation of canteens, he reminds critics of its responsibility for a wide range of operations that included maintaining hotels and designated areas for soldiers on leave, and "huts," where soldiers congregated to socialize and write letters, as well as providing athletic, entertainment, education, sightseeing, religious and other programs. He also supplies some statistics on the number of YMCA workers and casualties among them.

Box 2 contains Lambert's speeches and notes relating to his travel and other miscellaneous topics. Folder 1 contains travelogue-style notes and comments relating to his summer travel in Europe in the 1920s. They are written in many cases as if he were leading a tour or showing slides to accompany his remarks. Included are his reflections on travel and tourism and the cultural differences between Europeans and Americans. Folder 2 contains a compilation of speeches delivered by Lambert at various Masonic occasions; Lambert's own Masonic data is at p. 171. Folder 3 contains speeches on various topics, many prepared as after-dinner remarks before churches, clubs and banquets. Folder 4 contains speeches delivered at Masonic and other occasions, and includes (starting at p. 207) content about his World War I experiences similar to that in Box 1, Folder 3. Folder 5 contains data on European cities, landmarks, leaders and history appropriate for tours; Lambert also describes visiting the railcar in which the Armistice was signed. Folders 6 and 7 contain postcards, often with Lambert's notes on the back, of European scenes and landmarks.

***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>James K. P. Lambert</b>	<b>1918-1959</b>	<b>22 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Diary and loose item therein	1918-1919	2 items
Folder 3	Journal and related items	1919	5 items
Folder 4	Loose items from 1919 journal	1919, 1959	14 items
 <b>BOX 2</b>	 <b>James K. P. Lambert</b>	 <b>1922-1931</b>	 <b>152 items</b>
Folder 1	Travel notes and speeches	1922-1927	3 items
Folder 2	Masonic speeches	1924, n.d.	1 item
Folder 3	Notes and speeches	1931, n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	Notes and speeches	n.d.	1 item
Folder 5	Notes on Europe	n.d.	1 item
Folder 6	Postcards	n.d.	66 items
Folder 7	Postcards	n.d.	79 items

***BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

MSS LAMBERT, James Knox Polk, 1918-1959  
545 1864-1960

Diaries, speeches, notes and postcards of Simpson County, Kentucky native James Knox Polk Lambert relating to his YMCA work with the American Expeditionary Force at the end of World War I, his tours of Europe thereafter, and his involvement in Freemasonry.

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## **SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Architecture – Europe B2,F1  
 Belgium – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 Cavell, Edith, 1865-1915 – Relating to B1,F2,3; B2,F6  
 England – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 France – Travel and description, 1919 B1,F2,3  
 France – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1,5  
 Freemasonry – Relating to B2,F2,4  
 Germany – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 Ireland – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 Italy – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1,5  
 Monaco – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 Netherlands – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 Ocean travel, 1919 B1,F3  
 Ocean travel, 1920s B2,F1  
 Petit, Gabrielle Alina Eugenia Maria, 1893-1916 – Relating to B1,F2,3; B2,F6  
 Postcards – Belgium B1,F4; B2,F6  
 Postcards – England B2,F6  
 Postcards – France B1, F4; B2,F6,7  
 Postcards – Ireland B2,F6  
 Postcards – Italy B2,F7  
 Postcards – Monaco B2,F7  
 Postcards – Netherlands B2,F6  
 Postcards – Scotland B2,F6  
 Postcards – Switzerland B2,F7  
 Prayers B2,F4  
 Scotland – Travel and description, 1920s B2,F1  
 Speeches – Lambert, James Knox Polk, 1864-1960 B2,F1-4  
 S. S. *Arabic* – Photograph B2,F7  
 S. S. *Doric* – Photograph B2,F,6  
 S. S. *Doric* – Relating to B2,F1  
 S. S. *Haverford* – Photograph B1,F4  
 S. S. *Haverford* – Relating to B1,F2,3  
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 World War I, 1914-1918 – Comments about, 1919 B1,F2,3; B2,F4  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – Destruction and pillage, 1919 B1,F2,3; B2,F4  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – Humor B1,F3  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – Influenza, 1918 B1,F3  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – League of Nations – Comments about, 1919 B1,F2,3  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – Photographs B1,F3,4  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – Poetry B1,F2,3  
 World War I, 1914-1919 – Postcards B1,F4

World War I, 1914-1919 – Songs      B1,F3  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – Treaty of Versailles – Comments about, 1919      B1,F2,3  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – YMCA – England, 1918      B1,F2  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – YMCA – France, 1919      B1,F2,3; B2,F4  
 World War I, 1914-1918 – YMCA – Women, 1919      B1,F2,3  
 Young Men's Christian Association, 1918-1919 – Relating to      B1,F2,3

***SEE or SEE ALSO***

Young Men's Christian Association  
     See also:  
     YMCA

Niedermeier/Jeffrey 09/08/2015